

DISCURSO

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Land degradation and desertification are serious global challenges. Some two billion people worldwide live in areas affected by desertification, land degradation and drought. In the Sahel region, in particular, the land is susceptible to climatic change, population pressure and other man-made shocks. The productivity of land is falling and the yield gap is growing. Bold actions will be necessary to protect, restore and sustainably manage the land and soil and build the resilience of the affected communities and ecosystems. If implemented well, in the Sahel region, sustainable land management could help alleviate rural poverty; ensure long-term food security and lay the groundwork for sustainable inclusive growth.

In all these important policy areas, Brazil has been a leader. Brazil has been securing the health and productivity of its dryland resources and improving the livelihoods of its population for a generation. With Brazilian expertise and knowledge and with support from France, in the context of this tripartite partnership, a transformation in the drylands of the Sahel can take place. Through actions that focus on the use of appropriate sustainable land management technology and efforts to foster scientific research, degraded and desertified land in the Sahel can be rehabilitated

Under the current UNCCD Ten Year Strategy (2008-2018), building such effective partnerships (including in the Sahel) in order to improve the livelihoods of populations and the conditions of ecosystems affected by desertification land degradation and drought will be the basis of real progress for the people and for the planet.

I therefore see the type of south-south cooperation, envisaged under the agreement, as part of the DNA of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. The sharing of scientific

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knowledge and best practice is fundamental to the development and functioning of healthy and productive landscapes.

The Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) actively participated at the International Conference on the promotion of sustainable development in the drylands held in Niamey in October 2011. The tripartite partnership was concluded, between Brazil (Centre for Strategic Studies and Management), France ("Institut de Recherche pour le Développement") and several west African countries from the Sahel sub region, on that occasion.

As we move forward, in addition to supporting practical implementation of the action programmes in the Sahel, this partnership can help deliver on the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). At Rio, world leaders finally recognized the economic and social significance of good land management, particularly its contribution to economic growth, sustainable agriculture and food security, eradicating poverty, addressing climate change and improving water availability. They recognized the need for urgent action to reverse land degradation and will strive to achieve a land-degradation neutral world.

I am confident that the example of this tripartite partnership arrangement between countries of the Sahel, France and Brazil will be recognized as an exemplary initiative that is scaling up best practice. By turning threat into an opportunity, this is partnership at its most effective. It is galvanizing efforts towards full implementation of the action programmes to combat land degradation and desertification and will become a practical expression of the social, economic and environmental benefits of a land degradation neutral world.

I commend the initiative.